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ABSTRACT

This paper interprets a tale of resistance and its dissolution in an Educational Psychology class of male tradespeople employed as Technology Studies teachers in Secondary Colleges. Changes in identity required by the transition from manual to mental labor are so difficult that negativism and an aggressive pupil control ideology permeate the groups' cultures. To assist the students to better understand their own circumstances, a strategy was employed at the beginning of the course that involved a discussion of the fictional, but culturally-specific story of an individual negotiating the dilemmas of his new career and lifestyle. The process facilitated self-disclosure among participants and provided a 'loan of consciousness' through which the group might reconceptualize their own experiences. A cultural 'transition' appeared to occur, providing conditions under which reflection on one's own ideology and practice might proceed. An important outcome of the discussions was an increasing use of compassionate, just and effective strategies, when working with their own pupils, and an openness to learning in other teacher education courses. "People Becoming Teachers and Students: A Case-Study" is appended. (Contains 50 references.) (Author/LL)

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REWRITING CULTURAL NARRATIVES: PROVIDING THE CONDITIONS FOR REFLECTION AND EMPOWERMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper interprets a tale of resistance and its dissolution in an Educational Psychology class of male tradespeople employed as Technology Studies teachers in Secondary Colleges. In the past, changes in identity, required by the transition from manual to mental labour, had appeared to be so difficult that negativism and projection characterised these groups, in most of their course subjects, throughout their teacher education program. An aggressive pupil control ideology also permeated the learning groups' cultures. To improve the situation through an action research project, a strategy was used, at the beginning of their course, to assist people in better understanding their own circumstances. It involved discussion of a fictional, but culturally-specific narrative, telling the story of someone like them, negotiating the dilemmas of his new career and lifestyle. However, the process facilitated self-disclosure among participants to a level unprecedented in these groups and seemingly provided a 'loan of consciousness' through which people might reconceptualise their own experiences. A cultural 'transition' appeared to occur, providing the conditions under which reflection on their own ideologies and practices might proceed. An important outcome of these changes was an increasing use of compassionate, just and effective strategies, when working with their own students, and an openness to learning in other Institute classes. Implications for providing the conditions for reflection and empowerment in learning groups in teacher education generally are discussed.

A. INTRODUCTION: ISSUES AND OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH[1]

> *Once one takes the view that culture itself comprises an ambiguous text that is constantly in need of interpretation by those who participate in it, then the constitutive role of language in creating social reality becomes a topic of practical concern.* (Bruner, 1986, p. 22)

This paper tells and interprets a particular story[2]: of resistance and its dissolution in an Educational Psychology class of male tradespersons, employed as Technology Studies teachers in Secondary Colleges. Out of this narrative, I believe, emerge some useful insights for teacher education in general, which are related to the conference theme: 'Empowering the Professional'. How are people empowered through their teacher education courses? What role does reflection play in this process? What conditions are necessary for genuine reflection to take place in the context of a group and how might these be acquired?

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Grimmett and Erickson (1988, p. 6) suggest that *reflection* is prompted when the mind is in a state of doubt, hesitation and perplexity about a situation, its purpose ultimately being to prepare for action either overtly or in imagination. Mezirow (1991, p.210) describes some dimensions of *empowerment* as gaining: 'a more potent and efficacious sense of self'; 'a more critical understanding of social and political relations', and 'more functional strategies and resources for social and political action'. Lather (1989a, 1989b) emphasises that empowerment is not something we do *to* or *for* someone else, since it often requires people to modify their emotions and transform their perspectives. Similarly, Rappaport (1986), cited in Rehm (1989, p. 116), gives a working definition of empowerment as 'the force that releases powers of self-cure', as people gain greater control over the quality of their lives through cognitive, motivational and other changes. These powers are said to become particularly vital and dynamic within a group context, in which people assist each other to reflect on those aspects of their lives which seem to render them helpless. Indeed, Szkudlarek (1993, p.110) argues that: 'empowerment refers to supra-individual dimensions of education. It refers to postulates of creating another more just and more direct form of democracy that could bring about a broadening of the scope of freedom for groups and individuals'.

Thus, the question for teacher educators becomes not: 'What can we do to assist in changing individuals?' but, rather: 'How can we enable reflection, in the context of a group, in such a way that people, together, develop confidence in themselves as strategic agents, who can make a difference within their social worlds? What can teacher educators do to *enable* such reflection and empowerment?' Fay (1987, p. 103) notes that, to explore and elucidate such conditions, is one of the important tasks of critical science.

Technology Studies teachers, the protagonists in this story, had not in the past been noted for their capacity for reflection. Indeed, they had become somewhat notorious at the Institute of Education for their negativism and resistance to new possibilities for action. Apparently, changes in identity, required by the transition from manual to mental labour, were so difficult for them, that projection, supported by sexist, anti-feminist and racist humour, characterised these groups throughout much of their teacher education program (Mealyea, 1988, 1989; Gleeson, 1991). An aggressive pupil control ideology also permeated the learning groups' cultures, leading to practices which were decidedly unsuccessful in their own classrooms and served only to add to the considerable amount of stress which many were experiencing.

Having been invited to teach them and finding that I was no more successful than other lecturers, I wanted to understand rather better how to assist these people in learning new ways of working with their students. I wanted to help them in becoming

confident, competent and critically-reflective[3] practitioners, who could be compassionate and just with the adolescents entrusted to them. I also wanted to assist them in negotiating a difficult life transition (with all its attendant stress) more successfully than I had with the two groups already taught.

This paper uses data from an action research study, in which four successive intakes of Technology Studies teachers (Groups A, B, C and D) worked with me over their two 13 week semester units in Educational Psychology (for two hours per week, in the first and third semesters of their overall course). The first units constituted four action research cycles, which each involved: planning, undertaking strategic actions, making 'observations' of their apparent consequences, reflecting on them and then planning for the next research cycle (see Figure 1).[4]

What emerges from this story is the power of the learning group culture in assisting or inhibiting both learning and reflection. In some groups, ways need to be found to rewrite the 'cultural narratives', overturning some of the ideological assumptions, the limiting 'meta-narratives', which people bring to learning. There is a need for consciousness-raising and critical reflection, but this will only be undertaken if appropriate resources are provided, by which people can, together, remake their cultural worlds. This paper describes *one* way in which this was actually accomplished.

While other teacher educators' contexts may be somewhat different from this one (at times this story may appear somewhat 'larger than life'), nevertheless, whenever the content or activities of a course threaten the identities of those participating in it, the understandings acquired here are likely to have relevance. Such courses require people to think in ways very different from their accustomed frameworks for understanding the world, that is, they need to engage in 'perspective transformation' (Mezirow, 1991). Diamond (1991, p.16) writes that such learning 'represents the highest level of teacher development'. This paper, however, demonstrates that this is not an easy process, either for course participants or their lecturers.

B. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY: THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND THE COURSE

The Research Participants

All members of these groups were male, mature-age adults, who had worked as tradespersons for at least eight years prior to entering teaching. They had been, for example, carpenters, fitters and turners, electricians, automotive mechanics and

plumbers. Many had left school before completing year ten, having then undertaken an appropriate apprenticeship. Some confessed that, when they were at school, they were often perceived by themselves and others as 'trouble-makers'. As part of their course, which is an internship, they spend two days a week at the Institute, while teaching the other three days of the week in the schools. This, in itself, may have been a source of some of the difficulties.

A study comparing different teachers' work (Gleeson, 1990, 1991) found that, within the schools, tradesteachers had a culture of their own (supported by the geographical separation of trade workshops from mainstream classrooms). This culture was associated with: a rhetoric of authoritarianism; an exclusive masculinity; a mistrust of authority, mainstream 'academic' teachers and the training Institution; a sense of powerlessness in relation to mainstream teachers because of their debating skills; a view that power-sharing with students was 'unreal' and 'airy-fairy' and that teaching is not 'real work' because of its non-productive, nurturing and mental nature.

Changes in curriculum, requiring Technology Studies to embrace a greater concern with design, problem-solving, scientific principles and the social, environmental and psychological issues involved in technological innovation, rather than simply the making of products (Technology Studies Frameworks, 1988), had apparently created considerable stress among those who had previously been tradesteachers, teaching woodwork and metal-work, for example (Gleeson, 1990, pp. 197-8). The manual labour component, in which much of the tradesteachers' identity and masculinity were invested, had become of lesser importance, while removing the head/hand dichotomy, for so long existing in Victorian schools. Opposition to the new subject was often vehement among these tradesteachers.

Thus, the culture into which course participants were being inducted into the schools tended to work against the values of the Institute. New ideas about teaching Technology Studies and working differently with adolescents were often antithetical to the practices, discourses and understandings which pervaded the tradesteachers' culture.

Mealyea (1988, 1989), in his study of one such Technology Studies group, at the Institute several years ago, described how course participants' occupational identities, derived from their occupational socialisation, were severely threatened by the learning expected of them at the Institute, to such an extent that most rejected their program almost entirely, while clinging to each other for support. Yet, he observed (Mealyea, 1989, p.25):

But curiously, there was little real intimacy in the professed need for each other; rather the solidarity evident was more like a circular wagon train formation, presenting a solid wall as protection against hostile external marauders: women, ethnic groups, academics.

He concluded that the Institute experience had been largely dysfunctional and their learning minimal.

Indeed, my own initial experience with these groups, to some extent supported the view that, for these particular course participants, an internship system was inappropriate. Although a few members of my groups would appear interested and enthusiastic, particularly when they talked privately with me, others would, variously: argue almost every point, but on the basis of spurious evidence, joke inappropriately, appear apathetic, withdraw or show personal hostility towards me or certain aspects of the course. Particular problems seemed to arise when we discussed people's feelings or the importance of learning to listen to and understand others. Many adopted very punitive attitudes towards the adolescents who challenged them, frequently inviting further rebellion and hostility. Yet, they scoffed at other ways of working with students as being much too 'soft', possibly because such methods were inconsistent with the masculine identity which they wished to project within the group (Formaini, 1990). They appeared highly stressed by the processes of learning, changes in their lifestyle and difficulties in their classrooms, but were unwilling to admit this until quite late in their course. However, many did become extraordinarily sensitive towards their students and eventually demonstrated a deep and sustained capacity for learning. The potential was there within the groups but, in the early stages, I seemed unable to develop it.

An additional problem was that, in their resistance to the academic, mental work of the Institute, they seemed to be ensuring that, forever, they would be second-class teachers within the schools, perpetuating the 'dumb tradie' image, which they sometimes claimed that mainstream teachers possessed. As with Willis's lads (Willis, 1977), a partial knowledge of their circumstances only led to decisions which served to perpetuate the system which restricted them. Yet, if they could become more articulate and better informed, such people with first hand knowledge of the industrial world could be a potent and powerful influence in the lives of adolescents, particularly working-class adolescents, who often seemed to identify strongly with those of them who did develop a good rapport with their classes. In developing student-teacher relationships, which involve genuine negotiation of meanings and power-sharing, they could contribute to the realisation of an authentic democracy in the classroom, in the interests of empowering future citizens (Giroux, 1988). They might also have a useful perspective to offer to mainstream teachers from predominantly middle-class

backgrounds. Therefore it seemed important to persevere, in meeting the challenge of working with these groups of teachers more productively than before.

The Educational Psychology Course

The Educational Psychology course was originally conceived within an applied humanistic, needs-based, adult learning framework (Fuller, 1970; Wlodkowski, 1986; James, 1987; Knowles, 1990). Personal and professional development are both engaged through experientially-oriented activities (Kolb, 1984; Boud and Walker, 1989), designed to assist people in reflecting on, understanding and developing their own communication, leadership and stress management styles (Goodman, 1984; Schon, 1991). Participants are also exposed to a wide range of strategies both for encouraging learning and working effectively with groups and individuals, particularly adolescents, based on increasing knowledge of the psychology of learning, development and individual and cultural differences. However, the values espoused (and in use) are those of a humanistic pupil control ideology (Hoy, 1972), in which student infringements are seen as occasions for discussion and development, rather than punitiveness, leading to enhanced student responsibility - while recognising, at times, the importance of strong, assertive leadership. A clash with many tradespersons' and tradesteachers' cultural values was thus inevitable.

Methods used in the course include: role-play, simulation games, reflective exercises, case-studies, videos and small-group problem-solving for situations experienced in course participants' classrooms, along with lecture-discussions. Group participation is encouraged throughout, and people are asked to take increasing control over their own learning as the course proceeds, developing consensus about some of the content at times (Mezirow, 1981, pp. 79-80).[5] These are all activities which are generally well-received by other groups of Secondary and TAFE teachers.

Yet, both the processes and content of the course (and a female lecturer) appeared to be a threat to the masculine identity associated with productive labour. Indeed, some course participants suggested that all they needed to resolve classroom difficulties was to discuss among themselves - without any exploration of new possibilities for action, or critique of the strategies employed. Goodman (1984, pp. 14-16) notes that, in discussions among student teachers, there is often a tendency to focus on the 'How to?' questions, rather than the harder 'Why?' questions, and that going deeper needs to be actively encouraged by group leaders because of its threatening nature. Thus, it became apparent during the research that a critical perspective was required within the course (Diamond, 1991; Brookfield, 1986),

attention needing to be given to the ideologies of course participants, which obstructed their learning.

Fay (1977, p. 232) writes that, for people to change beliefs which meet particularly powerful needs which are an integral part of identity, there is required:

> *... an environment of trust, openness and support in which one's own perceptions and feelings can be made properly conscious to oneself, in which one can feel free to express and examine one's fears and aspirations, in which one can think through one's experiences in terms of a radically new vocabulary which expresses a fundamentally different conception of the* world.

Breakwell (1986, p. 31) notes that such conditions are at the heart of the philosophy underlying consciousness-raising, and Giddens (1990, p. 124) affirms that it is under conditions of mutual self-disclosure, where the balance of power is maintained among people in the group, that a sense of community and intimacy can really develop.

Yet, how could people, so afraid of demonstrating any signs of 'weakness', be encouraged to engage in such disclosures? How might they be assisted in exploring new social relationships within their groups?

Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett (1982, p.193) note that, if we wish to make changes in a pattern of social relationships, then we need to know how it came into being, its tensions and contradictions, how people in the situation relate to it, the potential within it and the constraints which need to be overcome. The potential for group solidarity in which people might support each other emotionally was present; the major constraint, however, seemed to be the fear of genuine friendship, in course participants' inability or unwillingness to speak of emotions with each other. What would create the conditions for genuine reflection and empowerment within such groups?

C. METHODOLOGY

The following section describes some of the principles of action research by which the study was conducted, the overall approach taken to the research and the specific methods by which data were collected.

Action Research

Largely qualitative action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; Smyth, 1991 and Elliott, 1991), within a framework of naturalistic

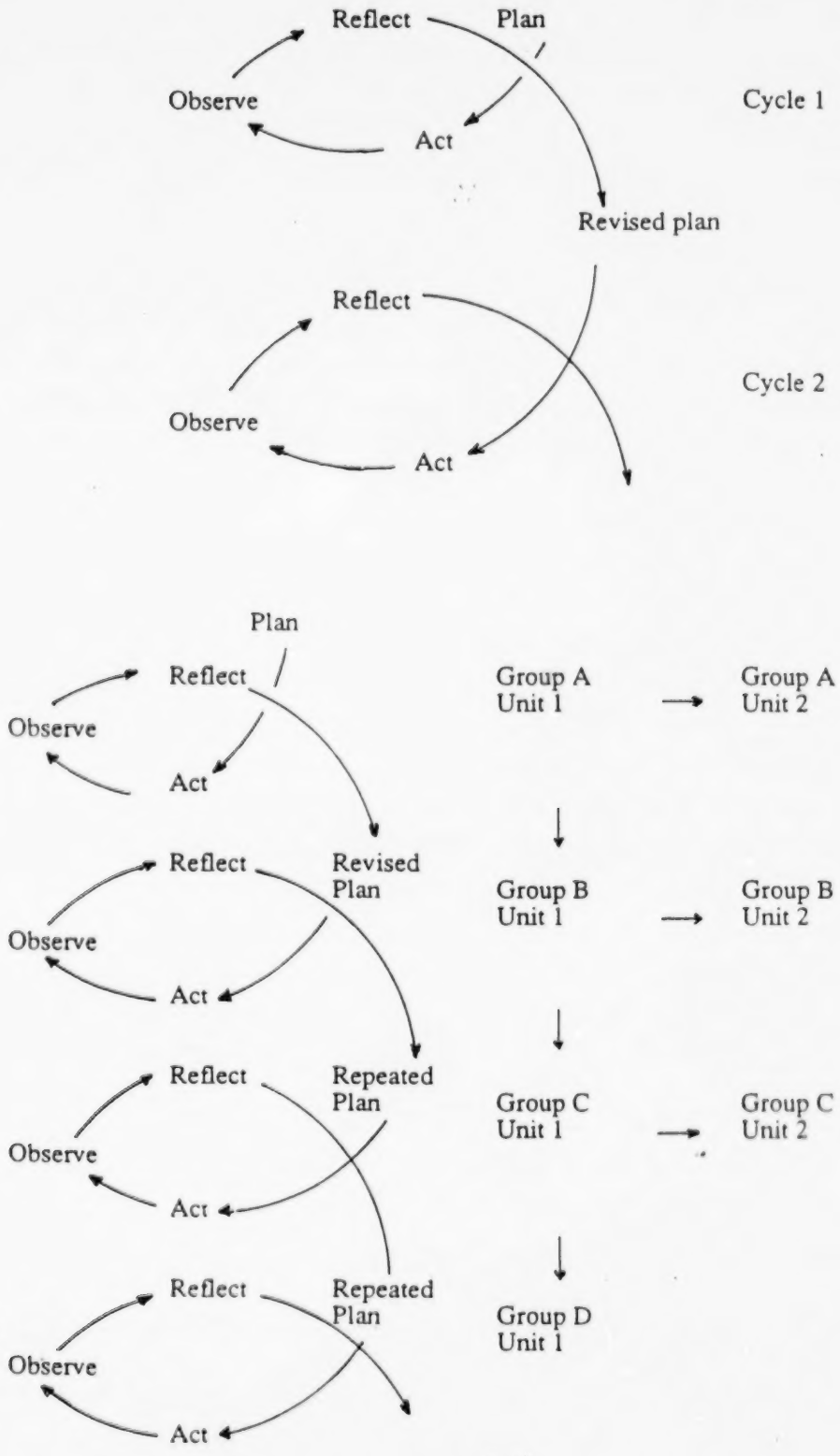
enquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), was selected as the most appropriate methodology, consistent with the values of the course itself. This methodology involved collaboration between the course participants and myself in improving the course to assist their learning and empowerment. The research would contribute to course participants' reflection and learning, while I too reflected on and changed my own practices and beliefs. This was individual action research (Smyth, 1986, pp.14-16), in that I was working as an individual teacher with a class. It was interpretive (Grundy, 1987) in the sense that I was seeking to understand the situation in which course participants and I found ourselves, while simultaneously looking for strategies which might change that situation for the better. The research was also emancipatory in that it involved ideology critique and perspective transformation, both for course participants and myself (Mezirow, 1991). This led to our all making changes in the social world at the Institute and, for course participants, within their own classrooms. However, it was through their personal agency that these changes were made, rather than through any structural alterations in their circumstances.

Conduct of the Study

On beginning the study (see Figure 1), I took my concern about improving the course to Group A, asking them if they would give me information about their experiences in class, to assist me in making appropriate revisions to their program. The course proceeded, but a pattern of responses rather similar to those of previous groups emerged. However, what they were telling me (and what I observed) indicated that I needed to find a way of enabling them to make changes in the views and expectations (derived from their cultural world), with which they had entered the course.

Similarly, I approached Group B and acted on a revised plan, based on reflections from the Group A experience. The difference was quite dramatic and startling, and through the action - observation - analysis - reflection process, I gained new insight into Group A's responses, as well as those of Group B. A further cycle with Group C and a minor follow-up cycle with Group D were undertaken to ensure that genuine improvement had been made, and that it was not that Group B were particularly amenable to learning for some other reason.[6] Similar, though not identical, responses to the course were apparent in Groups C and D. Thus, each research cycle lasted for about 13 weeks and, within these major cycles, there were 13 sub-cycles as, week by week, reflection took place on what occurred in each session and there was subsequent planning for the following class.

Figure 1 **Action Research Cycles in this Study (from Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982, p.11)**



Data Collection Methods

To obtain data by a variety of methods (and sources), for the purposes of triangulation and to enhance the trustworthiness of the study generally (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), the following methods were employed: audio-taping each class session; using feedback sheets (filled out at the end of each session) and written assignments, submitted at the end of the course[7]; course evaluations, based on class discussion at the end of each unit; maintaining an observational and reflexive journal (recording informal conversations, class observations and my reflections upon my own and others' actions); 'member checks', based on a document written for each group and presenting a selection of the data collected and the constructions placed upon them, for discussion and review; items produced in class; interviews and informal discussion with other staff members and some observations in the schools. An enquiry audit of the data was also conducted.

Lather (1986, p. 266) writes:

> *I propose that the goal of emancipatory research is to encourage self-reflection and deeper understanding on the part of the persons being researched at least as much as it is to generate empirically grounded theoretical knowledge.*

Indeed, this is a very important function of action research: that it empower people to take further reflective action within their various social worlds. In this case, the course and the research became inextricably linked.

D. 'PREJUDICE IN YOUR MIND': GROUP A'S STORY AND ANALYSIS

It was out of my experience with and analysis of Group A (simplified for this paper) that I developed some strategies to assist people's learning.

It appeared that four major, interrelated factors were associated with the variation in responses among group members to the Educational Psychology course: the willingness and ability to disclose emotions of stress, experienced both in teaching and as a result of the major life transition course participants were undergoing; the nature of initial views towards and expectations of the course; identity, associated with an open or a negative and closed stance towards learning, and the experiences of success or failure in teaching.

a. Self-disclosure about stress

After establishing what appeared to be good relationship with most people in the group (although people entered the course with widely divergent expectations), the fifth session, in which they were asked to discuss stressful experiences in their classrooms with each other, in small groups, appeared to be the point at which some people became negative towards the course. (The phenomenon of stress had been discussed in a previous session).

Richards (1991, p.337) describes such a transition as a micro-process of cultural change which:

> *... occurs when an action initiated by one or more individuals induces a shared cognitive and emotional response from group members, followed by joint acceptance or rejection of the action.*

In this case, the combined fear of intimacy and of transgressing masculinity norms (Formaini, 1990), together with their having few words at their disposal to discuss their emotions, appeared to lead to some people (mainly those who had entered the course with negative expectations) in becoming angry and ridiculing the activity and the strategies for stress management being suggested. My action was rejected.[8]

That discussion about stress somehow contradicted the masculine code (though anxiety about their classrooms was apparently overwhelming for many of them), seemed to be indicated in the following, somewhat defensive statement, taken from an assignment:

> *This group arrived fresh from the real world with a wealth of experience. All good men tried and true, with years of trade-oriented background. All having survived the real world. Couldn't this be seen as knowing how to understand stress in ourselves or in other people, cope with unusual situations.*

Similar sentiments were expressed by others who were negative about the course.

On the other hand, a positive person was writing, in a feedback sheet, how appreciative he was:

> *To know that I am not alone in my feelings of anxiety. I feel supported by other members of the group.*

Indeed, the feedback sheets began to show a pattern: those who were positive about the course appeared to be those who could be open about their feelings within their small groups, whereas those who were negative rarely made any personal admissions either to me or to others. In general, these negative people appeared to be displaying negativism in other lecturers' classes too.

In addition, it seemed that the positive people were starting to adopt a 'humanistic' approach to working with their students, abandoning the tough, custodial and punitive control ideology, with which many had entered the course. For example, one person reflected:

> *I always remember the teachers who gave me a hard time when I was a kid, and how I held little respect for them. To me respect is a very important part of a good working relationship. Without it little will be achieved.*

Others, though, rejected the idea of respecting students and working to help them develop a sense of responsibility. This apparently was much too weak. This issue was further illustrated during the sessions on communication skills for collaborative problem-solving, which was another low point in the course. Many favoured bringing back the strap. The connection between being in touch with one's own emotions and empathising with those of others (Jersild, 1955, p. 28) was becoming quite apparent.

b. Initial Views about the Course: Expectations

In discussing their objections to the course during a particular session, one person said (very bravely, in view of the culture which stifled dissenting voices through ridicule):

> *I'd always had the idea of ed. psychology as one of these arty-farty sort of things that academics and that go in for ... and I suppose you get - er, um - this sort of a prejudice in your mind, rather than do the thing and give it a go ... The hardest part is trying to overcome that initial prejudice.*

This was not well received by the more negative members of the group, who indeed appeared to have entered the course with a very jaundiced view of what the subject would be like. For example, one person wrote:

> *I first thought when starting this course ... sounds like its going to be VERY boring, full of headshrink crap to me.*

In general, it seemed that these views were maintained.

On the other hand, those who had entered the course with positive views, were writing comments such as:

> *Oh boy, roll on Thursday. Group therapy. I love it.*

Bruner (1986, p.47) notes:

> *... what human perceivers do is to take whatever scraps they can extract from the stimulus input, and if these conform to expectancy, read the rest from the model in their heads.*

Expectancy, stance and intention all affect how we feel and how we interpret the 'texts' with which we are surrounded. To some degree, we construct our own experience.

The positive people were those who entered the course with an open and interested stance towards learning, while the initially negative people, with one or two notable exceptions, remained so. However, the culture of the whole group was dictated by the negative people, the others being almost silenced, except when work was accomplished in small groups. These were hardly the conditions for emancipation and enlightenment.

c. Identity: one supported by negative coping strategies vs one accepting the inevitability of change

Some people, although admitting to difficulties, did accept the need to adopt new practices, often inconsistent with their previous occupational identities. For example, one person commented:

> *What had been my gut reaction was to be condescending and aggressive to people who would not work and this often proved to be destructive. I found it necessary to become more thinking in my responses. Being self-assertive did not come easily. When a student complained that he didn't understand something simple when it had been explained three times, it didn't seem natural to reply, 'I understand. It is a difficult concept'. But it certainly did tend to be the response that kept the student working...whereas the aggressive response would tend to stop any further questions and openness from the student. The self-assertive response is not spontaneous, but it is something that I am constantly being aware of and I keep working towards.*

This person also noted:

> *The biggest change for me in becoming a teacher has been the need to be consistently aware of others' feelings.*

Contrasting teaching with the work of a mechanic, he also wrote:

> *A mechanic is ever critical of people's work, and compliments in a workshop are neither expressed or often given. And so to always approach a student with a positive attitude or response has required a lot of change from my attitudes.*

However, another person, who found the challenge of change to be too great, wrote:

> *Being from a trade background, I found the in-depth reasoning and psychological approach to matters fairly difficult to grasp. That is when working in a trade type atmosphere, it was never really necessary to be aware of our use of particular behavioural strategies as in my present occupation. So right from the start of the course in Educational Psychology, I found it very difficult to relate to. Myself not being a great user of in-depth thinking, but rather relying upon 'jumping every hurdle as I approached it'. That is 'instinctive thinking' and reliance upon past experience and advice to formulate an opinion or reaction to an immediate problem.*

To become a 'thinker' would be to change his identity and this was a theme reiterated by a number of the negative people. So much of these course participants' knowledge of behaviour seemed to be embedded within 'practical consciousness' (Giddens, 1985), to which they had access only in action, without being able to explain how they 'knew'. To make this 'discursive', to be able to verbalise reasons for what they did, required considerable effort. There is also an emphasis on the use of experience here, rather than theory, and this too became a theme within the discourse of the group. Similarly, relying on one's mates, seemed to be much valued, particularly by those not very positive towards the course. One person wrote:

> *... I find the course immensely satisfying when, as a group, we discuss the week's battle scars, and make comparisons about our plans of attack, our counter-offensives, our victories and losses in battle.*

This metaphor also indicates the 'masculine' way in which teaching was being constructed.

It may have been that the sharing of experiences was a way of avoiding challenging ideas, staying with the 'how to' rather than the 'why' questions of teaching (see p.7 and Goodman,1984). However, perhaps, hearing stories of actions, embedded within concrete experiences, was a powerful method of learning for them. This is consistent with the work of Walkerdine (1988, 1992), who argues that concepts need to be embedded within contexts and practices which make them meaningful. It is also consistent with findings which emphasise the 'storied nature of teachers' knowledge' (Carter, 1993, p. 10). Indeed, telling stories was an important part of my own strategy for teaching them. But, perhaps it could be used more extensively.

d. A sense of success or failure in teaching

Whether or not people perceived that they were benefiting sufficiently from the course in their practice schools had a definite effect on their responses to it. However,

it was those who were prepared to learn and adopt some of the strategies suggested who were more likely to be successful. For example, one person wrote:

> *Many things I've got out of this course have helped me achieve this rapport with my students ... I'm a person who is getting a lot out of your sessions.*

The school context, though, was often a negative influence on their willingness to attempt new methods. Some supervisors were actively (though perhaps not consciously) working against me. As one person protested, with some annoyance about tradesteachers' attitudes towards their students:

> *The tradies say: 'Never apologise; never give them an inch; never explain'.*

In addition, some schools presented a much greater challenge than others. As one person (never very positive) wrote from the heart:

> *It is very hard putting different strategies into practice at the school where I am at present ... if we could maybe learn more about controlling uncontrollable kids.*

Yet those in objectively easier schools often refused to compromise on their hardline attitudes and were influenced then by the sense of failure they experienced. Occasionally, this meant looking to the course for help; more often it meant becoming even 'tougher' and then blaming the course.

Reflections on Group A

Breakwell (1986, p.115) writes:

> *Negativism can prepare a cocoon for the threatened person, a place of hibernation and safety. Yet, it is unlikely to be one from which he or she emerges metamorphosed. Negativism, in the main, militates against any change in the content of identity.*

This was what seemed to be exhibited in the course by those who entered it with negative expectations (possibly already a defensive response to an unknown or threatening area).

So, what was to be done?

It seemed that a new approach to the issue of stress was needed: one which was respectful of their culture but showed that to acknowledge emotion could be a means to strength. Perhaps their preference for stories could be accommodated here. Several years ago, I had written, in a self-help module for beginning TAFE

tradesteachers, a short 'narrative' about the transition to teaching: the problems of transition from manual to mental labour; the tiredness and stress often experienced; the inevitable difficulties of learning new ways of working with students and in following the often conflicting advice from other teachers; the problems of tolerating ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty in the circumstances of teaching and the assistance they might give to each other in this area; the bewilderment and anger sometimes felt in Institute classes when asked to question their own values and attitudes; the fear of not coping with academic work with its emphasis on reading and writing, and the stress on one's home life, when new learning and changes in life-style affect family relationships. This narrative could be modified and provide a rationale for the course, as a program to assist people in the resolution of these difficulties. It could also provide them with an intellectual understanding of their circumstances in adopting a new career (see Appendix).

Thus, the need for change, the importance of mutual support, and the recognition that others had felt as they did, and yet survived, could all be communicated through the story. My explanation of such matters with Group A might not have had the power or credibility, which a story of someone's experience, albeit a fictitious one, might have for such a group.

Thus, the strategy was designed to: assist people in coping with the stress of transition, through a better understanding of their circumstances; diminish people's negative expectations, in providing a powerfully presented rationale for the course; help people to construct a positive view of change and to be less fearful of it, and encourage them to work together in formulating strategies to be applied in practice, hopefully leading to success experiences.

I also wanted to confront the attitudes brought to the course more directly than I had before and to explain the purpose of maintaining an open stance towards learning. This exploration would also include mention of the attitudes towards the Institute in the trade culture of the schools, the negativism there often fuelling any negative feelings in new recruits (Hibburt, 1978; Gleeson, 1991). Could this provide an antidote to being confirmed in one's own prejudice?

However, I was still at a loss to know how to create conditions of trust and intimacy in these groups. The best that I thought I could do was to help people to talk together about the feelings of 'another', depicted in the 'narrative', which would then assist people in individual and private reflection - for those unable or unwilling to reveal themselves. Gradually then, perhaps, the group culture might be changed, as those who were more confident than others took the risks of self-disclosure in the group.

E. 'THE OPENNESS OF OUR GROUP': STORIES AND ANALYSIS OF GROUPS B AND C

The following section provides evidence of the differences between Group A and Groups B and C and then analyses the influence of the strategic actions in enabling these changes to occur.

1. Evidence of Change

Apart from some relatively minor changes in sequencing of the Educational Psychology course, and the introduction of the strategic actions described above, the units for Groups A, B, C (and D) were very similar in their content and processes, at least in the activities introduced by me. However, the responses of Groups B and C to the course were markedly different from those of Group A, and to all other previous groups of Technology Studies teachers I had taught. Indeed, both of the groups' cultures appeared extraordinarily positive, so much so that, at times, I found myself doing 'double-takes' in disbelief. (Similarly positive responses were also seen with Group D). People who had entered the course with negative expectations had apparently changed their views substantially. For example, one person, with very negative attitudes initially, wrote:

> *My attitude in the first few weeks of the psychology classes was quite anti and negative. I now go to class with a hungry appetite, looking to devour all the information and techniques that I can.*

In particular, the session on stress experiences, which inspired a negative cultural transition in Group A, was positively received by both groups. Expressing the theme of the responses from Groups B and C, a person wrote in a feedback sheet:

> *It gives me hope to think that I can get on top of these teaching stresses and live like a human being one day in the future.*

Neither group expressed any negativism about the session. Similarly, the sessions on communication, also high points of resistance in Group A, were extremely well received. A fairly typical response from feedback sheets in both groups is exemplified in the comment from a previously negative person that:

> *[I learned] that I may not listen enough. I can practise listening and defusing situations and see tangible evidence of success or failure. I think this is something one can keep trying and succeed at.*

And, from others, came the comments: 'Everything excellent value' and 'Heaps of relevant information'.

It appeared that, in these two groups (and in Group D), people became almost at ease in discussing their emotions and developed psychological relationships with each other far more intimate than those of the traditional mateship, usually observed among these people (see p. 6). They were appreciative (although occasionally critical) of the course and became quite reflective about themselves and about the practices of teachers within the schools. They were also exploring new ideas in their classrooms and many were reaping the benefits of becoming quite successful. For example, one person wrote in his assignment (and later talked about this incident in great detail) about collaborative problem-solving with a recalcitrant student, using assertion and reflective listening. He described it as follows:

> *After his next defensive response, I gave some more reflective listening. At this point I was exploding with overwhelming excitement. On the outside, I was giving a calm, reflective response, but on the inside I was screaming 'It's working! It's actually working!' It was brilliant! For once I could face the class without having that 'that will teach you who's boss around here' atmosphere (which was only creating a rift). Instead, we walked in, calm and feeling like something had been achieved. I now have a feeling that at last I have something concrete to use as my positive weapon against undesirable behaviour.*

This may appear to be somewhat technical reflection, an experimental trial of a new method, without the accompanying shift of values and perspective which would make such action a necessary part of his respect for students. However, this did emerge as time went on and was exhibited quite early in the course by many course participants. For example, one person wrote about his experience of helping a student with a learning disability and his success in encouraging him to participate:

> *The advice from his teachers was simple - 'leave him to himself, put him in a corner and leave him'. This was not only cruel but irresponsible... over a period of eight weeks I gradually gained his confidence and started to introduce minor work tasks to him. To my surprise he attempted them.*

He went on to describe further positive consequences and the boy's father being particularly appreciative at a parent-teacher interview. Similarly, another initially very negative person wrote, rather wryly, about his experience of drawing up rules and consequences with his students. He claimed to be unsure about how the dramatic change in behaviour of the group had really occurred, explaining:

... it may serve to brighten your day to see how some of your tactics can be used to benefit understanding and benefit a classroom situation ... Perhaps it was the group discussion, maybe it was just letting them know that we both (that is me as the teacher, them as the students) had obligations and rights. I don't dare ask them, just in case they get the crazy idea that I miss the old days.

The groups were also characterised by enthusiastic participation and eagerness to learn, one person writing: 'Psychology was something I learnt Friday and you could implement the strategy on the Monday'. Indeed, the group cultures were extremely positive towards the course. Even if strategies were not immediately successful, people adopted a positive stance towards accepting the challenge of developing alternatives. For example, one person wrote:

... Not forgetting that you may also fail. Then it is time to try an alternative teaching strategy to accommodate groups and individuals. I see this as a great personal challenge.

People did not blame the course. Similarly, those who were highly stressed appeared to be appreciative of the help which was given to them.

Yet a number of their comments in class and in assignments indicated the magnitude of some of the changes required of them, in adjusting to the communication style appropriate to a school. For example, one person wrote:

Being so long out of school, I could only visualize going into teaching with the little Hitler attitude; brutality and force would be the way to make these kids learn and pass their year. I arrived at this procedure when thinking back to my school days and the way teachers taught myself, six of the best, a rap across the knuckles, or a letter to the parents which ended up in the hiding of a life-time.

They were no different from Group A in this respect.

So, how had the changes occurred? It did indeed appear that the strategic actions had been particularly influential.

2. The Influence of the Strategic Actions

The case-study narrative (see Appendix), depicting someone like them, was presented to Groups B, C (and D) for discussion, in their second Educational Psychology sessions of Unit 1. In each group, the narrative appeared to enable self-

disclosure to occur, to a level unprecedented in Technology Studies groups. For example, one person commented during the plenary session:

> *Thought heaps in common with that: thought we could go on talking about it all day actually.*

Another, initially rather negative person, wrote, as feedback on the case-study:

> *I learned that so many people before me have done this course and have expressed the same emotions I have. It has been useful in that I feel I can relax a little and not feel left behind.*

The theme of 'everyone feeling similarly' was also expressed by another initially negative person, who wrote on his feedback sheet:

> *Persons expressed their thoughts and feelings in a very open way. To put it in my own expression, I believe we are all in the same boat.*

In an assignment, still another initially negative person, reflected on the similarity between his own feelings and those expressed in the case-study:

> *The case-study I found to be very close to home (and still do). I found it easy to identify with the subject as it mirrored many of my own feelings in relation to both my new profession and my home life.*

Another wrote of 'the metamorphosis' through which they were going, and someone else commented:

> *People were opening themselves up and showing in a very real way some of the personal emotions that were from deep within without perhaps realising that they were ... I feel that I'm becoming part of a team, a unit. And together we'll support each other and build each other up and so at the end of our 2 or 3 years we will have a bond which will be very strong and an effort to break.*

This was exactly the kind of intimacy, solidarity and group support which I had been hoping to build, but was unsuccessful in Group A. Similar responses were also evident in Groups C and D.

So, was it that the case-study provided a situation in which course participants were allowed to speak to each other, about their already rich, internal emotional life, in which feelings of anxiety, confusion, threat and helplessness were all clearly conceptualised, along with anger and frustration? (Most members of Technology Studies groups appear to have a wonderfully rich vocabulary for 'frustration') From

listening to the small group conversations, that seemed not to be the case. In general, it was the language of the case-study which was being used and phrases like: 'Yes, I feel like that', abounded. During the plenary, in reporting back, for example, one person said that he was:

> *... like Bob - he's always worried about that next lesson.*

And, of the negativity of teachers at school who say that the 'kids' are 'ratbags and 'no good', he said:

> *That sort of concerns us.*

And in Group C, one person wrote in his assignment:

> *Stress was a word that did not fit into my vocabulary. Therefore it came as a big shock to realise, about eight weeks into my new career that maybe the cause of the sudden bout of insomnia was the new word 'stress'.*

It appeared that the language of feeling was somewhat strange to them, when bound up in their own experiences. In the discussions, their experiences were being relabelled and thus reconceptualised. Reports during the plenary did not use 'feeling words', other than those employed in the case-study. Yet, in my journal, writing of the beginning of session four, I was musing:

> *Was intrigued by the list of words they associated with stress. Almost all were internal responses whereas groups tend to list external stressing factors. Is this group more internally reflective? Or have I 'made' them this way?*

With hindsight, it appeared that the narrative and subsequent discussion had been a 'loan of consciousness' (Bruner, 1986), which started a developmental process, the metamorphosis, already mentioned. As Diamond (1991, p. 91) writes:

> *By showing what is and by entertaining possible alternatives, the writing and the reading of narrative helps alter what we do. We need to learn that that world of our present consciousness is only one of many worlds that exist ...To change our stories is to change our lives.*

A 'loan of consciousness' helps us to perceive and reconstruct our stories differently (Bruner, 1986, p. 76). It brings what might be private into the public, the cultural domain and makes feeling, thought and action coherent and culturally relevant. Such a 'loan' is a negotiable transaction, not an imposition, but one in which the student may 'borrow' the knowledge and consciousness of another (sometimes the teacher or a peer, as in tutorials or discussion groups), to understand new aspects of language,

meanings, practices and relationships - and, as these are transformed and the change is shared with others, to create a new identity and a new culture.[9] Cultural and individual narratives are then 'rewritten' and limiting 'meta-narratives' discarded.

On both a cognitive and an affective level, the case-study appeared to have been successful, in enabling people to: know that others were 'in the same boat'; become more aware and self-accepting, reconceptualise experiences, including feelings, along lines which might be helpful later, both at home and at school, and understand the nature of their circumstances while in transition. The need for change appeared to have been accepted and group support throughout was recognised as a positive coping strategy. Benhabib (1986, p. 334) notes:

> *In that we can name what drives and motivates us, we are closer in freeing its power over us.*

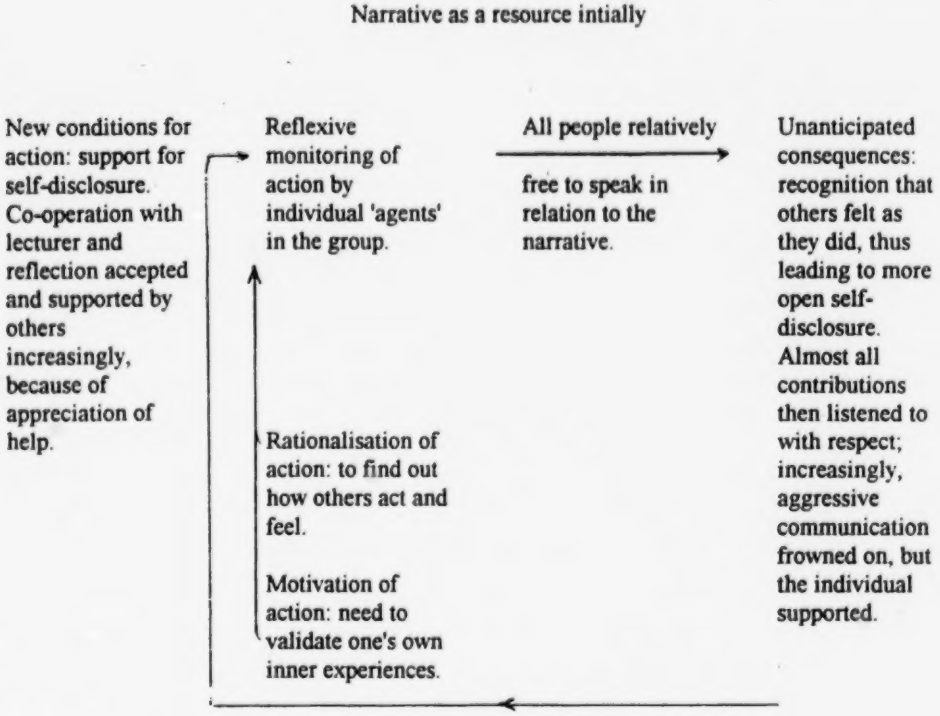
Thus, the need for people to develop a rich language of feeling becomes apparent, if they are to overcome the disempowering effects of negative experiences.[10]

Indeed, the case-study might be conceptualised as a resource (Giddens, 1985), giving people the power to speak of feelings (see Figure 2). This process of self-disclosure then produced a 'transition' (Richards, 1991), a positive, cognitive and affective response, both to the course and to me, as people realised that others felt as they did and they began to understand those feelings. New conditions were then created under which the course might proceed, its content being highly valued, strategies being explored in practice and stress experiences shared.

This transition also appeared to provide the conditions under which people would reflect upon their own practices, the premises behind them and upon the negative effects of some aspects of the tradesteachers' culture within the schools. Indeed, when negative attitudes were discussed, there was much warmth and good humour within the groups. People agreed though that they were influenced by their colleagues and mentors in the schools, who were telling them that they would learn little at the Institute. In fact, negativism among other teachers towards the Institute and Technology Studies sometimes became a focus for our understanding and problem-solving. For example, role-play on how to cope with a difficult supervisor took place in session 11, in Group B. As one person remarked in class:

> *If those teachers are negative it may be due to their lack of success - different from us. We're looking to change things.*

Figure 2 **Cultural Production in Groups B, C and D** (From Giddens, 1985)


Narrative as a resource intially
New conditions for action: support for self-disclosure. Co-operation with lecturer and reflection accepted and supported by others increasingly, because of appreciation of help.
Reflexive monitoring of action by individual 'agents' in the group.
Rationalisation of action: to find out how others act and feel.
Motivation of action: need to validate one's own inner experiences.
All people relatively
free to speak in relation to the narrative.
Unanticipated consequences: recognition that others felt as they did, thus leading to more open self-disclosure. Almost all contributions then listened to with respect; increasingly, aggressive communication frowned on, but the individual supported.

It seemed that most members of Groups B and C were actively interrogating aspects of the tradesteachers' culture in the schools and the theme of maintaining positive attitudes towards students, themselves and learning was highlighted again and again throughout the course. And, in relation to new learning, one person commented reflectively:

> *The openness of our group in those early days I believe helped all of us to open up and accept, or at least try to accept, the somewhat new ideas that were put forward in Ed. Psych.*

That they also felt empowered to put these new ideas into practice has already been described (see pp. 18-20). Similarly, it was not just in my own classes in which these new attitudes were adopted. Other lecturers too noticed the differences between Groups B, C and D and all previous Technology Studies groups - in these people's openness to new learning and possibilities for action.

F. A BRIEF SUMMARY OF INTERPRETATIONS AND ANALYSIS

In Group A, people who entered the course with negative expectations and mixed with others who were similarly pessimistic, seemed largely to be those most attracted to a particularly masculine code of behaviour. This precluded self-disclosure and denied the existence of stress or feelings of 'weakness' (Formaini, 1990). Stressed by the transition to teaching and the alien, academic environment of the Institute and resenting the idea of self-change which seemed to imply inadequacy, course participants resorted to the use of negativism as a strategy for coping (Breakwell, 1986). Their former cultural world and that of many of the tradesteachers in the schools could both be drawn upon to support their negative views (Gleeson, 1991). They created a culture in which reflective thinking was ridiculed and such sanctions constrained the positive people from contributing substantially to the life of the group. In those sessions in which both acceptance of content and also engagement in activities contradicted the male code, initially 'negative' people became particularly disenchanted with the course. Indeed, negative cultural 'transitions' seemed to occur within these sessions (Richards, 1991), after which at least some display of resistance to class activities became an influential group norm.

In Groups B, C and D, however, self-disclosure was facilitated early in the course, thus providing a means for productively managing one's own stress level through group support. The male code was also changed as this practice became acceptable. A positive cultural 'transition' appeared to occur at this time. Similarly, a new and constructive conceptualisation of change itself seemed to have been accepted. Different frames were used to make meaning. Thus the activities of those sessions presenting such difficulty for Group A no longer posed a threat. Indeed, in a context of increasing self-awareness and self-reflection, attitudes towards students and the course itself could be changed, so that the previously unacceptable content of those 'difficult' sessions was perceived, by members of Groups B, C and D, as material helpful to their own well-being. Indeed, the self-disclosure, thus promoted, led to group solidarity and support, through which stress could in most cases be managed more effectively. Interestingly also, after the group culture had become more positive, challenging and accepting of self-disclosure, people seemed quite able to relate to that material of the course which was not embedded in narrative (though it did use concrete, specific examples). The tradesperson's identity, as a learner through experience only, seemed to have been modified to the extent that other modes of learning became somewhat more acceptable.

In addition, positive attitudes and further learning were supported as: strategies suggested in the course became incorporated into people's practices in the schools and

in their personal lives and the 'successes' were reported back to the group; the negativism of the trade culture was critiqued; practices in the school were critically examined (Carr and Kemmis, 1986); self-esteem was enhanced and a sense of empowerment prevailed.

The conditions for learning which predominated in Groups B, C and D seemed to have been provided in some small groups within Group A. However, learning was inhibited within Group A as a whole by the negative group culture. In a competitive climate in which 'fronts' needed to be maintained (Goffman, 1959), those with difficulties in understanding the course felt unable to find the support and help they needed. This situation may have exacerbated the negative feelings and probably contributed to some withdrawal and hostility. Similarly, constant failure in school classrooms may have led to further rejection of the course in Group A and considerable negativism.

Suffice it to say that, in Group A's second unit, the culture did become more positive and this was associated with greater self-disclosure and admission of stress. As one person wrote of his group's presentation, in which a number of formerly negative people had chosen freely to work on the topic of stress:

> *When we first presented the topic on stress to the class there was some laughter. However, as the discussion proceeded, many students could relate the things we were saying to experiences and feelings they had themselves. By the end of the presentation, we were faced with answering a number of questions ... I was like a lot of people and attached a social stigma to stress. I had thought it was a lot of bullshit.*

In Group B, on the other hand, increasing competitiveness because of a heavy workload and the introduction of a grading scheme, temporarily reduced the solidarity of the group and a few people started to display negativism at times. However, a dramatic session, in which there was open self-disclosure from a number of people, drew the group together again. In Groups C and D fairly open self-disclosure continued throughout and tensions which arose in these groups were addressed in group discussion as required.

G. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION[11]

This has been a story illustrating the importance of the group culture in either facilitating or inhibiting emancipatory learning, which has the potential to lead to changes in individual and group identity. When the identity change of a major life transition is also involved, then the issue of finding ways of assisting people in coping with their emotions becomes particularly acute. Yet whenever, as teacher educators,

we ask people, in the group context, to engage in self-reflection on people's practices in schools, the conditions need to be intimate, supportive and yet challenging, if people are to take the risks of moving beyond discussion of the superficial, or the purely intellectual aspects of the situation. Perhaps, in many teacher education classes, a fortuitous combination of personalities provides for those conditions. Or, the learning required is quite consistent with people's individual and collective identities and strong emotions are not aroused. However, what this study has done is to show that such conditions may be created by helping people to understand their circumstances, through culturally-specific narrative, providing a loan of consciousness, particularly in the area of the emotions, but also enabling people to take the risks of self-disclosure in a non-threatening psychological environment. Otherwise, many people, who find self-disclosure difficult, may simply resist the process - perhaps not in the overt ways exhibited by these classes - but nevertheless denying themselves the opportunity for using the group to good effect. People become free to act in productive ways when they support each other through genuine group solidarity. The individual, 'in communitas' (Szkudlarek, 1993), using group solidarity to support others and to be supported, can then become empowered to act productively elsewhere. Without such conditions, to interrogate restrictive cultural ideologies may only arouse defensiveness and negativism. As Diamond (1991, p.46) writes:

> *Becoming and staying a teacher involves complex changes and development not only in teaching behaviour but also in cognition and emotion, and ... these changes occur in powerful contexts.*

Finding ways of enhancing the conditions for reflection and empowerment in the learning group is the substance of this paper. These conditions may help to ensure that the learning which takes place in other powerful contexts, such as the student teachers' classrooms, may be productive, rather than traumatic and debilitating.

ENDNOTES

1. The research reported here is described in more detail in: James, P. 'Rewriting cultural narratives: an action research study in cultural transition among tradespeople becoming technology studies teachers'. Melbourne, La Trobe University, PhD thesis, 1993.

2. The idea of tale-telling is derived from Van Maanen's work in: Van Maanen, J. *Tales of the field. On the writing of ethnography.* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988.

3. Critically reflective practitioners are said by Zeichner and Liston (1987) to be those who are: 'willing and able to reflect on the origins, purposes and consequences of their actions'. Critical reflection is often contrasted with technical reflection, in which people ask: 'What can I do?' This is an instrumental approach to problems. In practical reflection, on the other hand, people ask: 'What should I do?' and seek to engage in morally appropriate action.

4. This paper tells the story of the first units only. Data from the second units supported the general thesis that, as people became open with each other and solidarity was maintained, a psychological environment was created in which people could learn and change. When people became distant and competitive (see p. 26), tensions arose and negativism erupted.

5. In the first group of Technology Studies teachers taught, I attempted to negotiate the curriculum with them from the beginning. This seemed to provoke too much anxiety, however, and I subsequently abandoned the strategy. Instead, a structured, but flexible, progam was presented to subsequent groups in their first session, the rationale for this being clearly explained. Incidentally, the first group chose to delay the study of stress until the end of their first unit. Yet, in feedback, they asserted that a study of stress management should be mandatory at the beginning of the unit for other groups, since the insights gained in these sessions were essential to the 'implementation' of appropriate strategies for working with students.

6. Groups were all comparable in the mean age of the participants, trade areas represented and in the variation in ability levels among group members.

7. The course operated at that time on a pass/fail basis in which, if assignments were unsatisfactory, they would be returned to people, with feedback and assistance, so that course participants could eventually reach the required standard. Comments made in assignments are therefore very 'honest', course participants not fearing that a grade might be jeopardised by offering negative views. Recently, a grading system has been introduced.

8. Interestingly, in the groups which Richards studied, the requirements of self-disclosure often precipitated a negative cultural transition.

9. This is an extension of the concept and practice of 'fixed role therapy' (Fransella and Bannister, 1971, pp. 133-4; Diamond, 1991), in which therapists assist clients in writing new narratives for their lives. These are then explored in practice in the client's social world. As far as I am aware, however, using culturally-specific narrative in this way has not previously been reported in the literature, nor has a loan of consciousness been linked to the dissolving of resistance and negativism in groups. One would imagine that the strategy could profitably be explored in other resistant learning groups, in which people feel compelled to participate in a subject in which their identities are threatened.

10. Although, ultimately, it appeared that the narrative served to enhance the relationship between myself and course participants, this relationship appeared not to be the major influence by which people in the group became more positive towards the course. In both Groups B and C (but not Group D), I was engaged in some conflict with group members, which detracted from the relationship in the beginning. Ironically, my relationship with Group A appeared rather better initially than that in either Groups B or C. It was, rather, that the discussion of the narrative enabled people to establish more intimate relationships with each other, which was crucial in influencing the differences between the groups. Indeed, this story challenges the idea that a good student-teacher relationship is central to successful learning. This is an assumption, based on humanistic, counselling models of learning, which fail to take into account the influence of the group culture. A good student-teacher relationship may be helpful to learning, but is not sufficient to create the conditions for reflection and empowerment.

11. Implications of this study related to gender are explored in a paper: 'Reconstructing Masculinity in Teacher Education: A Story of Cultural Change', to be presented at an inaugural conference in gender and teacher education - 'Voicing our Agendas: Gender and Teacher Education', Bali, July, 1994.

APPENDIX

PEOPLE BECOMING TEACHERS AND STUDENTS: A Case-Study*

Bob is a highly skilled motor mechanic, who decided to fulfil a life-long ambition in becoming a teacher. After the uncertainties of being in business, teaching seemed to offer security, time for relaxation and an opportunity to help young people. The family would have to budget very carefully over the next two years because of a sadly diminished income, but he considered it worth the sacrifice. He wanted the opportunity to share his skills and life experience in a position of authority and responsibility.

He became somewhat less enthusiastic when the Head of Department at the school warned him : 'You have to show the kids who's boss right from the start; make an example of a couple of them; they'll soon get the message'. In spite of being a rather gentle person, Bob accepted the advice, as from one older and wiser in the ways of teaching and, in his first class, presented himself as a tough, aggressive, no-nonsense person. As the weeks went by, though, he found his students increasingly difficult to understand; they seemed resentful and apathetic, and he would often go home feeling angry, frustrated and helpless. However, he knew of another teacher at the school who had tried to be really friendly and nice to his students and who had apparently lost all control of one of his classes. He wasn't sure which was worse.

He also felt confused by the often conflicting advice and negative comments made by some of his supervisors. One believed that Technology Studies was a waste of time and that lessons should focus on skills training rather than on encouraging students to produce their own designs. In fact, he seemed quite resentful of Bob for bringing new ideas and methods of working into the school. Another complained that he was still not strict enough, while someone from a different department suggested that he should relax a bit and encourage students to take more responsibility for themselves. He also resented the almost exclusive focus on his faults, rather than on what he did well. If it had not been for a teacher who had recently completed college himself, he might have been thoroughly disillusioned. However, the two of them would get together and discuss each other's classes and work out ways of improving them. Bob felt that he learned more from these informal chats than from any number of written criticisms of his lessons and, after observing his friend's classes, found renewed confidence in exploring ways of working with his own students.

He found the teacher education course a mixture of frustration and enjoyment. Yet, sometimes he was so caught up in the lessons he had to take the next day that it was difficult to concentrate on class activities. What he really enjoyed were discussions with his fellow students, in which he discovered that he was not alone in his concerns, and classes in which he learned new strategies and skills to explore in his own context. He also looked forward to those sessions in which he was exposed to ideas he had never considered before. Sometimes he felt bewildered and angry when asked to question his own attitudes but, at other times, he felt delighted with his increasing ability to look at issues from many different points of view. However, one irritation was that he felt patronised by some of his lecturers. They treated him more like a school-boy than a responsible adult capable of working things out for himself - or so it seemed, and he dreaded writing assignments. Rather than presenting his opinions freely, he would imagine the negative criticisms his lecturer might make and then his writing became stilted and formal. He still recalled some of the humiliations of his school-days when it came to the written word.

At the end of each day, he felt tired. So much was happening to him. He had thought that he would have time for hobbies and relaxation, but he became increasingly aware that his mind rarely left his work. He would keep reviewing the events of the past day, or debate with himself how he might best organise tomorrow's classes. He knew that his partner found it difficult to understand his preoccupation. They had always discussed work before. She had helped him with the paper-work and liked to be involved. However, she was becoming increasingly impatient with a person who was immersed either in lesson preparation or his own thoughts and whose idea of relaxation was to slump in front of the television set. He seemed less tolerant of his son's behaviour too. A bit of harmless mischief appeared to be a real threat to his authority at home. His partner once remarked: 'I'd have thought a teacher would know how to manage his children better than that,' and it stung. Bob felt dissatisfaction with himself at home, but found it difficult to change. There were so many other pressures with which to cope.

Questions

1. In what ways can you identify with Bob's concerns?

2. In what ways are your own concerns different?

* Modified from a case-study presented in: James, P. 'Role Change of People becoming Teachers and Students'. In Peak, G. (ed) *Educational Psychology for TAFE Teachers*. Sydney, ITATE, 1984.

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